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AN IDYLL
,
AND OTHER POEMS

AN IDYLL AND OTHER POEMS

By
E. HAMILTON MOORE

Author of
"The Flame," "Ygraine," "Etain and Otnel," etc

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TO MY MOTHER

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AN IDYLL

DAPHNE, down a forest glade,
All a summer midnight strayed,
Through the shadows, dusk enlacing,
Back and forth her steps retracing,
While, with one attendant star,
Cynthia wheeled her lucent car
Through the azure fields of night,
Piteous of her errant plight.

Oh, but she was young and fair !
In her loosely knotted hair
She had set a wild rose trail,
Ghostly sweet and ghostly pale.
And her scarcely rounded breast,
Gleaming through the filmy vest,
Waited yet some glad boy lover
All its fragrance to discover ;

AN IDYLL

And her lifted kirtle showed
Where a rosy ankle glowed ;
And her foot was arched and white
As Diana's poised for flight ;
And her eyes were starry spheres,
Dim with dreams and dazed with fears :
Virgin all, from dewy lips
To the slender, shapely hips,
Where the silver girdle slips ;
Maiden, from the golden crown
To the border of her gown,
And the twinkling feet that pass,
White as daisies, on the grass.
Through the moonlit forest ways,
Lost and wildered, Daphne strays.

Men would set her pulsing fingers
In a palm where scarcely lingers,
Cold and sluggish as a dream,
One last trickling of life's stream.
They have given the lovely prize
To chill lips and purblind eyes,
Shrivelled limbs and palsied head

AN IDYLL

And a dull heart cracked and dead :
Wintry eld for April's bed !
For a hire of counted gold
All her sweet perfections sold,
White and shrinking with despair,
To a cold appraising stare,
And a mumbling mouth that brushes
Dewy bloom from burning blushes,
And a shaking hand that clips,
Lover-like, the rounded hips.
. . . Cupid, break thy bow for spite,
Cynthia veil thy vestal light,
Venus to the foamy main
Sink thy car, nor rise again,
If this thing befall ! . . .
. She sits
At her spindle—all her wits
Wavering and distraught ; her face
White as death for Love's disgrace,
Sorrow pearling at her eyes
For to-morrow's sacrifice.
Come and go her anguish'd sighs,
Heaving her young breast. . . .

AN IDYLL

. A wing
Flutters from the heaven of spring :
All unseen, the laughing God
Wanders down the forest road ;
Knows one heart where love is sleeping,
Sees a fair-faced maiden weeping ;
Knows one heart too proud for love,
Sees a gentle, captive dove,
Only made for love's caressing,
Shaped for happy youth's possessing :
" *Corydon, that scorns my rule,*
'Shall with Daphne go to school.'"

Gently then he dries her tears,
Breathes his message in her ears,
Like a Maytime Zephyr blowing
Over fields where clover's growing ;
Whispers her of garden closes,
Where Love laughs among red roses ;
Whispers of green forest spaces
Where with Beauty, Youth enlaces ;
Shivering, sighs their rapt embraces,
And deliciously is dumb. . . .

AN IDYLL

All the murmurous wild bees hum,
And the waving boughs say *Come*,
And the rustling branches close
Soft behind her as she goes.
All the plummy grasses lift
From her footfall light and swift,
While the fronded ferns uncur!
Fragrant curtains round the girl :
Ever in a magic maze,
Through the happy forest ways,
Far and further, Daphne strays.

But the summer darkness falls
Fragrant in those leafy halls ;
Far are all familiar faces,
Strangely show the forest places,
Shadows drape the twisted thorn,
And the night wind sighs forlorn.
Stealthy four-foot creatures prow,
Shrills the bat and hoots the owl.

Fears assail the maiden's breast :
Where, oh Love, the happy nest ?

AN IDYLL

Where the sheltering arms to keep
Gentle guard about her sleep ?
'Neath the vast night-haunted skies
On a mossy bed she lies,
Calls on Cupid, god of lovers,
While refulgent Cynthia covers
With a silver shining veil
Her cold beauty, chaste and pale.
For she saw where Cupid went
Down the forest glade content,
Laughing as his bow he bent—
Love, with golden feet unshod,
And the glory of a god
Round about his going shed ;
Garlanded with roses, red
As those drops his arrows dew.
Love, with pinions green and blue
Like the peacock's coloured pride,
Or the changes of the tide.
Glad that maiden lips should cry
Cupid 'neath the starry sky,
Glad, that to his mastery,
Unafraid, a maiden heart

AN IDYLL

Yields, nor fears the barbèd dart.
So, beneath a flowery thorn,
Waits the coming of the morn,
Glad that snowy girls should stray,
Through a fragrant night of May,
Down the woodland's magic way.

All the balmy midnight air
Of Love's harbourage grew ware.
All the nightingales began
Singing, and the Pipes of Pan
Wooed the flowers along the spray,
Leaning where young Daphne lay,
Heedless of the ready dart
Bent to pierce her yielded heart.
Till a bower of white and red
Grew above her mossy bed,
And about her innocence
Shot upright a fragrant fence ;
Whitest lilies, pure in seeming,
Golden-hearted lilies, teeming
With the honey of Love's dreaming,
Through her slumbering sense to instil

AN IDYLL

Sweet submission to Love's will,
While the starry night of May,
Soft, enchanted night of May,
Slowly turned to azure day.

And young Corydon came by
When the dawning lit the sky ;
While the shadows lingered dark,
Shrilling like a heaven-bound lark.
Where the shimmering forest pool
Gleamed with lilies pale and cool,
Plunged, the crystal deeps to swim ;
And the wave was fain of him,
Swift of foot and clean of limb,
Body slender as a girl's,
And a head all dusky curls.
Olive-coloured, meant to capture
Some white girl with sudden 'rapture,
And his laugh the youngest thing
Waking in the woods of Spring.
Shaped for love, but ah, too proud,
To his sole contentment vowed.
All the forest maidens rue

AN IDYLL

Corydon that will not woo,
All the mountain maidens sigh,
Longing, when he passes by,
Laughing with a scornful eye.

Little ripples, rim on rim,
O'er the watery mirror swim,
And the Dryads, they that house
In the spreading forest boughs,
Peer at him, now half gone under
The clear wave, wide-eyed for wonder ;
Beckoning gently, call and call.
And the water-maidens all,
White and slender, lily crowned,
Close their hands to ring him round :
Softly, Corydon, they say,
Come beneath the waves to play,
Be content, and never reach
Towards the osier-covered beach.
We have fairer sights to show
In our watery halls below.
There the summer noonday fierce
Scarce avails the gloom to pierce,

AN IDYLL.

Shot with quivering gold uncertain,
As a dream enwoven curtain.
We have kisses, soft and chill,
That high beating heart to still.
Come away, Oh come away,
Never seek the shore to-day.

Swift he breaks the linkèd band,
Mocks them, laughing from the land.
Scornful of the echoed plaint,
Still resounding, sweet and faint :
“ Not for Corydon your kisses,
Never lure with beckoning blisses,
Never bribe with liliated charms,
Heart secure from love's alarms.
Nay, should Cupid's arrow chance
At this armoured breast to glance,
Idly loosened from the quiver
How the feathered dart would shiver,
Snapped in twain with ne'er a pang ! . . . ”

All the wakened woodland rang
With a sudden sun-kissed laughter,

AN IDYLL

And a soft hush followed after,
Like a kind of silent thunder.
Corydon scarce breathed for wonder.
Ever further as he ranged
Seemed the woodland magic changed ;
Seemed some spirit walked beside him,
And a 'voiceless word to guide him.
Seemed some music, wild and sweet,
Lured and led his wandering feet :
Down a perfumed green arcade,
Led him to a forest glade,
Like an emerald cup that showed,
Where a rosy wine o'erflowed.
Spring that brimming chalice filled,
Rapture from the draught distilled,
Sudden longing, misty eyes,
Breath, a passion of quick sighs,
Quickened foot and paling cheek,
Something, something, still to seek !
Corydon, Oh Corydon !
Why so suddenly put on
This new passion ? Step that quickens,
Heart that sighs and swoons and sickens ?

AN IDYLL

What the tumult unconfessed
Shakes thy doubly armoured breast ?
Wilt thou find a wood-dove's nest,
And a brood of fledgling young,
In the fragrant branches swung ?
Wild bees' store of winter honey,
Rocky haunt of hidden coney ?
Not a white girl laid asleep,
With a lilied hedge to keep
Her dim dreaming ! Corydon,
Cupid's rebel, get thee gone !

Oh, he finds her mossy bed,
Rosy blossom overhead,
Whitest lilies, like a fence,
Set to guard her innocence !
Scarcely seen, his eager heart,
Takes a sudden, anguished smart,
Quivers there the feathered dart,
Cleaves the centre not in vain—
Oh, the keen, delicious pain !
All its honeyed poison spent,
Cupid, of that deed content,

AN IDYLL

Laughing through the forest went,
Laughing down the flowery glade
Thro' the summer morning strayed.

Knelt by Daphne's side the youth :
Phantom fair or very truth ?
Cupid teach his pains to test.
Warmly heaved the filmy vest,
Softly stirred the snowy breast.
Timorous still, his fingers strayed
Towards her whiteness, half afraid.
Such a thrill did shake him then,
He must touch her yet again,
Lest enchantment mock his gazing ;
Some gold, scattered tresses raising
To his lips. Like living things
How they coil their glittering rings
Round his fingers, fain to be
Taken in their wizardry !
Next the rosy gleaming shoulder
Wooed his lips, that, straight grown bolder,
Sought her mouth : there at a draught
What a jocund sweetness quaffed

AN IDYLL

Corydon ! . . . Her eyes from dreaming
Opened wide with starry beaming ;
Met his own, as in the brink
Of dim waters stars might sink
Their clear splendour. Each on each
Stared. She framed her lips for speech.
Corydon, no question staying,
Kissed them close again, she swaying
Like some blossom flushed and pale,
Summer-breathing winds assail.

Oh, but she was fair and young !
In her heart a pæan rung ;
Happy triumph, unashamed,
On her kindled cheek out-flamed—
Only Love's with nought to rue,
Knew him but her dream come true,
Rapture shaped in glad boy-fashion,
Born of summer's midnight passion—
As a blossom springs to birth,
Fragrant, from the sun-warmed earth ;
As a bee with quivering wings
Murmurous to the blossom clings—

AN IDYLI

So possessed, and so possessing,
Took the gift, the god confessing.
In his hand her own she laid ;
Down the happy forest glade,
Corydon with Daphne strayed.

All the summer day together,
Through the gold and azure weather,
Hand in hand those whispering lovers
Walk till silvery twilight hovers,
And beyond the sunset clear
Starry sentries wink and peer.
Softly then their steps retracing,
Lip on lip, and arms enlacing,
To that mossy bed they hie them.
Cupid, come no evil nigh them !
Youth, and Love, and Maytime madness
Fill that green retreat with gladness.
Philomela sit and sing
Youth and Love and deathless Spring.
Yet with yearning in the strain,
Plaining Love's delicious pain,
Sing away her trembling fears ;

AN IDYLL

Pearl the notes like linkèd tears,
Rainbowed with a starry hope.
Tell her, even lilies ope
To their ardent noonday lover
Honeyed hearts white petals cover,
Else, his wooing warmth denied,
Wither in their maiden pride.
Then, before the dawn of day,
Spread brown wings and fly away,
Happy songster, far away !
Leave them in their leafy dell,
Hearts that need not Philomel
Love's mysterious lore to tell.

Whispering through the forest trees
Sighs a little new-born breeze,
Rocks the chestnuts' fragrant spires,
Then, with gentle breath, expires.
Now the mounting sun may peep
At these lovers laid asleep,
Glinting at the youthful pair,
Handfast in their flowery lair.
Still their parted lips are turned

AN IDYLL

Where their eager kisses burned,
Still her hand caressing fingers
Those dark curls where midnight lingers ;
Still his happy arms enfold her
Slender side and gleaming shoulder,
While the piping throstle shrills
Hymen to the woods and hills :
Hymen ! Hymen ! Care begone !
Oh how blest is Corydon !
Hymen ! Hymen ! Glade and grove !
Daphne she has found her love.
Mating turtles, kissing flowers,
'Joy not more delicious bowers ;
Blending dews of sunwarmed showers
Cannot merge their glittering orbs
Closer than his love absorbs
Her white soul . . .

From the blue sky
Seems some spirit stoops to sigh, .
Breathes a far-off prophecy
Of the yellow leaf and bare
Branches, and the waning year,
Of the wintry days that come

AN IDYLL

When the woodland choir is dumb . .
Spreads a little filmy cloud,
Like a gossamer white shroud,
(Such as dandelions send
To foretell the summer's end),
Weeping tenderly . . .

The shower

Turns a sun-weaved rainbow's dower,
Flung across the happy bower,
Where they wake, and each on each
Gaze with wondering, wordless speech.

EVE

WHEN wisdom stoops to mortal clay,
To build the second Eden's bower,
No angel set to keep the way,
No serpent coiled among the flowers :
Eve, of her children vindicate,
Shall speak her foemen in the gate,
Regent serene of golden hours.

O praise her, ye the ransomed race,
Who, radiant in creation's morn,
The light of vision on her face,
For all her children, yet unborn,
Cried challenge to the dread decree
That fenced the fair, forbidden Tree,
And laughed the avenging Fates to scorn.

The harvest of the gradual years
Behind her exiled footsteps springing,

EVE

Knowledge and suffering, death and tears,
And all the choir of poets singing—
Her spirit chose ; and to engage
The Powers of Darkness flung her gage,
Heaven's vault with Judgment trumpets ringing.

And louder than the thunder's peal,
And wilder than the lightning's glare,
The gates of perished Eden reel,
And flaming swords are brandished bare :
Forth ! Forth ! the way of tears to go,
Where, for her roses, nettles grow,
Sad hemlock, brier and wasteful tare.

O far forgot that Garden state,
She sets her forehead to the stars ;
Tho' legions hold the golden gate,
Her soaring spirit scoffs at bars.
Beyond the bounds of place and time
Her dreams aspire, her visions climb,
To far milleniums dedicate.

But still, her pilgrim steps to guide
From the lone heights of Lost Endeavour,

EVE

Went Love ; his pinions, rainbow-dyed,
And stàrry glory lost for ever.
Homesick for Eden's flowery spaces,
A child that feared the angel faces,
Recreant to Life's dear service never.

No boon denied, no sacrifice
Withheld, even to the yoke of Death
She bowed to pay our schooling's price,
Created for immortal breath.
And, for the children of the tomb,
Kindled, to cheer the empty gloom,
The trembling rushlight of her faith.

Close on her tender bosom clung
First-fruit of body's love and pain ;
The first low cradle song she sung, .
And taught the wondering world the strain.
And dug the first cold, shallow bed
In earth, with heart and hands that bled,
And lips that shaped the old refrain.

EVE

And all the spectral host that haunt
 With phantom fears the mortal mind,
Despair and hunger, war and want
 She knew, and wept for humankind.
Embattled banners blazing red,
And vultures that divide the dead,
 And Furies wailing down the wind.

And so endured their scorpion rods,
 Dispenser of that sacrament
That set a heap of daisied sods
 For penalty and monument.
Mother of Birth and Death is she
Who gave her Eden bowers to be
 Maker of Men who make the Gods.

MIRAGE

Oh that I might
Walk in some quiet field by night,
With yellowing corn-stalks one way bent,
And on the whispering wind the scent
Of clover's coral-coloured horn,
And far off fragrant bean-flowers, born
To be the summer bee's delight.

Oh that I might !

Oh that I lay
In some deep bosomed glade to-day,
Where, under feathery fern, the rills
Run whispering from the russet hills ; ,
And foxglove lifts a purple steeple,
Chiming to call the Fairy people
To dance amid the shadows grey,

At close of day.

MIRAGE

Oh I would sleep
Where ocean laves a rocky steep,
With sea-birds nested on the ledge,
And ivy to the waters edge,
And round me still the calling gulls,
And the sea's undertone, that lulls
All wearied hearts, all eyes that weep :
Oh might I sleep !

Oh that I stood
At the lost heart of some green wood,
With dim arcades of dusky pines,
Where-thro' the slanted sunray shines
With vagrant splendour, to illumine
The drowsy, aromatic gloom ;
Some far, forgotten solitude,
Where stockdoves brood !

Oh that I were
Where the black-berried juniper
Climbs the grey hill, and all around
The misty, mountain silence, crowned
With hidden skylarks, singing, singing,

MIRAGE

At the cloud's heart, and sheep-bells ringing,
And 'the wild bees' melodious stir—
Oh that I were !

Oh let me drink,
At some cool fountain's mossy brink,
Forgetfulness ! Oh let me lave
My hurt in some Lethean wave,
Where harts-tongue drips, and hoary boughs
Remember sad Druidic vows,
And starry bubbles, glint and sink,
All round the brink !

Oh but I dream !
Here's neither wood nor sea nor stream,
But either side the dusty way
Some window swings to catch the ray
Of sultry noon. The tired day lags •
Between pale skies and burning flags :
Oh cool mirage, how fair you gleam !
Oh but I dream.

THE BROWN BIRD

THERE grows a green tree in a dell,
A nest within green branches swinging,
A brown bird in that nest doth dwell,
Fills the glad woodland place with singing.

Around, the fragrant silence thrills
To hear that bird's full-throated rapture ;
The swift stream hastens from the hills,
The falcon poised forgets the capture.

The honey-bee, with drowsy hum
The golden-hearted blossoms wooing,
The ever whispering reeds are dumb,
And hushed the cushat's plaintive cooing.

And slow, reluctant-footed Hours,
With sister hands enlacing, linger
Entranced in those delicious bowers,
Nor heed the dial's shadow finger.

THE BROWN BIRD

Till from the flow'ret's purple cup,
The thirsty noon, with ardent beaming,
Each quivering dewdrop gathers up,
To weave the mists of twilights' dreaming ;

Till twilight fades into the West,
And all the starry flames are burning,
Such gladness shakes that brown bird's breast,
The swimming spheres delay their turning.

Oh who hath learned the woodland spell,
The happy, secret marvel guessing,
What tale that brown bird hath to tell
Of joys beyond our poor possessing ?

For me, for thee that birdie hath
A song to sing, a word, a wonder :
Come, let us seek the woodland path
The road that runs the bent boughs under.

Come, seek the rainbow rill that sings,
Down from the Hills of Vision flowing,
Come, follow fast the falcon's wings,
The dandelion feather blowing.

THE BROWN BIRD

There grows a green tree in a dell—

Oh thither all the world is wending !

A birdie in her boughs doth dwell—

Oh happy bird ! Oh song unending !

A FOUNTAIN

IN the chill October air,
Dian on a fountain stands,
Bow and arrows in her hands
And a garland in her hair.

And to deck her autumn bower,
Dahlia's pointed flames are burning,
Yellow leaves, to earth returning,
Fall and fall, a silent shower.

Dian, wherefore, bow in hand,
Eager huntress wilt thou linger?
Mute is every summer singer,
Soon will winter bind the land.

Round her slender ankles play
Crystal waters to caress
Her white carven loveliness,
And her poised flight delay.

A FOUNTAIN

With an old enchanted tune,
Ever, ever whispering round her,
In their circle they have bound her,
From the valleys of the moon.

Of a hoary, crested mountain,
Where a Shepherd dreaming lies,
Of a Goddess from the skies
Stooping, sings the silvery fountain.

Marble silent, whitely smiling,
In the water's lisp and hiss,
She remembers one mad kiss,
All the tedious years beguiling.

Till the last dead leaf is whirled
Down a blast November darkens,
Still the same sweet song she hearkens
While the tempest is unfurled.

So, behold her, stilly lover,
In a bower December spangles,
While the keen north-easter jangles
Fiercely clashing boughs above her :

A FOUNTAIN

Mute and cold and marble fair,
 'Neath the frosty starlight beaming,
 Dian, on her fountain dreaming,
With a snow-wreath in her hair.

THE ISLAND

Oh far away, beyond the foam,
My heart is like a sea-bird sailing,
To a grey island in the west,
With thymy slopes and rocky crest,
And widely wheeling plovers wailing ;
And there it's home, and there it's home.

There, in the midst, a little hill
All dight with purple August heather,
And wide and windy places where
The yellow gorse is full aflame,
And shaggy woods where aye together
The mated turtles coo and bill.

A lonely mere, a lilyed brim,
Has dusky twilight hills to bound it ;
And rustling reeds that never utter
The constant, secret things they mutter,
And always, always silence round it,
A shadowy brooder, veiled and dim.

THE ISLAND

And on a turfy hillock, lone
Under grey skies, an old grey Altar ;
A hoary, lichened watcher, dumb,
Out of forgotten ages come ;
And clouds stoop low and free winds falter,
Sighing, about the Druid Stone.

A phantom thing in sooth it seems,
That wind-swept upland, ragged border
Of leaning shrub, those piteous skies,
Those gleaming wings : have other eyes
Beheld ? Or is that still recorder
Illusion in a land of dreams ?

THE LURE

A NEW Odysseus, from the seas returning,
The purple seas, far-heaving, snowy-crested,
By the loved hearth the wave-worn wanderer rested,
Watched the clear embers burning.

Yet with dilated eyes, as rapt in vision,
Where homely coiled the smoke, the torches glittering,
He sang of lands enchanted, fields Elysian,
Starred asphodels, fair glittering.

Took harp in hand, for all their jocund laughter,
The revel of their feast and goblet brimming,
Some nameless joy beyond far ocean hymning,
And silence followed after.

Too narrow seemed that pillared hall. The calling
Of the wide sea broke at the marble portal,
And golden stars from purple distance falling,
And voices vast, immortal.

THE LURE

All they have left that hearth fire's friendly burning,
The brimming cup, the torches starry beaming,
To some far joy, some land of old, sweet dreaming,
Beyond the sunset, turning.

FANTASIA

WHAT shall I say
This silvery set of summer day,
The balm air sweet with gathered hay,
The little moon, that lovers love,
Set in a purple sky above
Those fading hills : a pearly boat
Amidst the early stars to float,
And ere the rose-fringed clouds grow grey,
To sail away !

What shall we do ?
She has our hearts aboard. We too
Are drifted somewhere strange 'and new
Beyond the twilight's misty curtain,
Into some dreamland, vague uncertain,
Where Rapture's shadow eyed as sadness,
And all Life's meanings turn to madness
Under some dome of spangled blue,
That lets Heaven through.

FANTASIA

Oh Love, to drift !
To find the darkening barrier's rift,
And be, where wheeling planets swift
Thro' endless lustres tireless coil,
Still watchers of celestial toil :
See round our rocking skiff the spray
Of some far-surgings Milky Way
Foam of spent suns tempestuous lift—
Oh Love, to drift !

THE EMPTY HOUSES

THE empty houses in a row
Stare with their glassy, corpse-like eyes,
As I go to and fro,
With heavy step and slow,
They seem to watch, with dull malignant eyes.

"Thou alien thing," they say,
"What dost thou here with thy still throbbing heart,
And dreams of far away,
And memories green and grey,
In which our bricks and mortar play no part?"

And through the dusty window pane,
I see strange eyes look out, strange shadows flitting,
While, through the falling rain,
Like faint Aeolian strain,
I hear the tired wind sigh, where I am sitting.

THE EMPTY HOUSES

But no bird voices come,
And no trees rustles at the wide-set door ;
There is no wild bees' hum,
The leaden skies are dumb,
The empty houses mock me evermore.

My heart, my tired heart thrills,
As I go to and fro, and up and down,
For secret, springing rills,
And yellow daffodils,
And smoke of homely cots, far from the lonely town.

THE JOURNEY'S END

So long the open empty road,
Bent back, accustomed to the load,
Up climbing hill, down dropping hollow,
Tired foot, I follow ;

Watching, on either side the way,
The changeful country melt away,
The springing fields' sun-dappled green,
Dark woods between :

Now stand I at the journey's end,
No star to guide, no pilgrim friend
The misty mournful night to cheer,
No comrade near.

Here's the dim country of Farewells,
Uncharted, vast ; no traveller tells
The confines of the grey domain,
Mountain or plain.

THE JOURNEY'S END

Through the long day, with aching back,
I've shouldered Sorrow's journey-pack,
Might never once the burden doff,
Or care put off.

But respite now. This narrow gate
Bids entry. Still's the night and late,
The timeless hour my trouble yearned,
The sand-glass turned.

What if no starry beam illumine
The folded hush, the empty gloom?
I need no pilgrim worlds to light
My last good-night.

Here I'll do off my cares and sleep.
My humble bed, so straight and deep,
Has room for me, but none to spare
To harbour care.

SONNETS

THE SONNET

THE Sonnet : who defines the scope and plan ?
Petrarch's our master all ; shaped to rehearse
His stately Laura's praise the stately verse,
With careful rule to make and rhyme and scan.
But then to English bards contagion ran,
And Sidney, Spenser, Drayton rang the chimes
Of change harmonious, and enlacèd rhymes.
And Shakespeare wrought a measure ripper than
That lady's bard essayed. And the sublime
Singer of Paradise but touched the strings,
And left them, quivering still, when angel's wings
Caught him to cleave the clouds. Elizabeth
Came last and carolled in the face of Death
Immortal Love that lives in deathless rhyme.

SONNETS

LOVE SONNETS

(1)

HAST thou ne'er seen some lark find liberty,
That, all its fledgling days, was pining pent
Behind strait bars of close imprisonment,
And had no song, save one dull, listless cry ?
But when the gate was oped, it scarce dared fly
From that sad house, to soar to new content,
But feared the over-arching firmament,
And that bright heritage of summer sky.
Such timorous flights as these the songs I sing,
Remembering yet old tears, and sorrows done.
Too much I fear new bars ; scarce dare I wing
A wider circle. Long captivity
Hath made me weak ! But, Oh, thou dawning sun,
These fluttering essays are yet made to thee !

SONNETS

(2)

IF thou be Love, and Love be Lord and King,
So art thou thereby Lord of me, who gave
Myself to thy dear fealty. Yet no slave
Kneels to thee here. The loyalty I bring,
Looks in thine eyes, and spreads as free a wing
As thine, the unknown of Life and Love to brave,
And cannot stoop nor cower. Then, ere thou crave
Such love of me as hath not anything
Of equal rights to yield, even unto thee,
Weigh this : There be who put sweet love to shame,
And crown themselves, for fear the god forget,
Thinking to prove most love where most they claim,
Do thou not so ! Thou art more royal yet,
So much thou giv'st, so little crav'st of me.

SONNETS

(3)

I KNOW thou lovest me as thine eyes do Light,
That, free and boundless, doth encircle thee.
When Love and Light have no more liberty,
The glad day ends, and cold and dark comes night.
This dear prerogative is thine by right,
Since I have made thee monarch over me,
Free as the light to let me joy in thee,
Who never served for duty, but delight.
I love thee past my power to tell my love,
But I would prove thee, constancy can pair
With widest freedom. I'll not flatter fair
And say thou art mine All : There's Heaven above,
And this dear world of faithful hearts to share.
These have their worth. Thy Love's beyond compare.

SONNETS

(4)

COULD'ST thou love better did I give thee less,
Mine eyes less free with thine, my lips more coy ?
Or shall my heart be niggard of her joy ?
Would'st thou have *nay*, when all of me cries *yes* ?
I never learned my favours to assess !
Thou knowest their yielding my most dear employ.
The wise world warns, Such easy lips will cloy,
And weary grows the lightly won caress.
Oh Love, is this the truth, and must I scant,
To hold thy heart, the hours in thy dear arms ?
Alas, poor me ! How shall I see thee want,
And yet deny, to gild some fancied charms ?
My love's no price nor shall have. What's the fee
God doth exact for Heaven ? Love too goes free.

SONNETS

(5)

IF I should die to-night, and thou with naught
For memory save some kisses and fond speech
Our lips once asked and granted, each to each,
When first Love's childhood bounded all our thought-
Hadst thou no more to give, nor more besought,
At that last Judgment I'd my Judge impeach
Who made me woman, and so made me rich,
And all his gift to paupered mockery brought !
And yet this may be. Death that comes to all,
Shall knock for thee and me. Dost thou delay,
And dear delights put off from day to day ?
Come, wilt thou, Love ? and take ; then tho' his call
Divide our spirits, ere this flesh turn clay,
It shall not grudge that it was robbed of all.

SONNETS

(6)

THOU hast a man's strength, and my spirit knows
That word whereby I am woman, and obeys.
Thou art lord of me henceforth, in all my ways
Acknowledged. With my love my service grows.
And as the blood through all my being flows,
So now thy dear control, and never stays
That at this point or that my spirit says,
Not he, but I. Now separate sense must close,
And lose itself in complete unity.
But, Oh thou worshipped strength to which I bow,
Comest thou in grief, and can I solace thee ?
My lord, howe'er thou comest ! but dearer now
A thousand times, when thou dost kneel to me,
And lay betwixt my palms thy throbbing brow.

SONNETS

(7)

THIS heart of mine's no inn. These doors stand wide
Only for thee. This flame that dwells there falls
Only on thy loved image on the walls,
Who art the god of the place, and none beside.
But I'll ungod that I have deified,
And *bid* thee come (Oh 'tis my Love that calls)
Thou Man I love, whose manhood 'tis enthralls
More than the Seraphim with wings spread wide,
Straining at Paradise, could catch my breath
With marvel. But thy feet are set on earth.
Thou hast shed tears, Belovèd, and thy part
Fills up the lesser round 'twixt life and death
With griefs no seraph knows, and short sweet mirth :
Oh human Love, come to this human heart !

SONNETS

(8)

IF I shall live till thou and I are knit
In closer bonds than yet our spirits know,
These to thy hand I'll bring, and whisper low,
Time comes at length, and brings occasion fit !
See here, my Love, thine own, that never yet
Eye looked upon till now. And then I'll go
And dream how *Presently he'll come*—and lo,
Ere the dream's done, thy lips, and *This was writ*
Love, of our Love ?—and then thy kiss again
And thy dear arms, and silence, Love's great noon !
So may it fall ! But Death may beckon me,
And other eyes may scan what's but for thee,
And yet these words shall reach thee, late or soon,
And be my lips to kiss away thy pain.

SONNETS

(9)

LOVE, in this little record canst thou read
How day by day my love for thee is grown.
Say to thy heart, "How all her pride is flown!
This flower is ripe for me to pluck indeed!"
I pray thee, gather me. I'll prove no weed.
But if thou let me longer droop alone,
Needs must I die, being so much thine own
Whose hand it was first sowed this happy seed.
These verses are my flower-song for thine ear:
Sunrise and star-shine, wind and gusty rain
Love's night and day and winter sleep are here,
And, sweet and strong, the kindly fostering earth.
These petals pale are delicate bliss and pain;
The root strikes deep in Love's deep human mirth.

SONNETS

(10)

WHEN thou dost over-read what I have writ,
Thou shalt not play the critic, lest thou find
Unworthy word or line. But be as blind
To lurking faults when thou dost construe it,
As are thine eyes, that dwell upon my face
With Love, to set a beauty on my brow
Not mine by Nature's gift, but ever now,
Sealed by thy lips, my crown by sovereign grace.
Dear, love these lines that tell my love of thee,
And make no comment when the song is done,
But come, my Heart, where, by some soundless sea,
I wait thy steps, and stretch my hands to see,
All radiant in the softly westering sun,
Some glorious Love-god, silent, circle me.

SONNETS

(11)

I'LL not instruct thee how to thank me, Sweet ;
Silence or speech from thee is eloquent. ' .
Speak what thou wilt. No clear-stringed instrument
Could make my heart with such quick rapture beat
As some low words of thine. I'll not entreat
This said, or that unspoken. Give love vent !
I'll laugh with thee, or weep, and, being spent,
Together, Love, we'll mock the laggard feet
Of overtaking Time, our jealous foe.
But Oh, when I look up into thine eyes,
Ne'er sigh, and say : " Thy tongue can rhapsodise,
But I am dumb, and cannot sing thee so ! " .
For these are echoes, fitful, faint, and low.
Thy Love's my poem, Dear, that never dies.

SONNETS

(12)

ALL mornings when I wake, I say your name,
And turn, 'twixt dream and fancy, where you lie
With greeting low to catch your low reply,
And wait, and laugh a little in sweet shame
To know myself alone. You never came
At dusk or dawn, to lean with kiss or sigh
Above me, you, whose heart has drawn so nigh
Mine own as to the sacrifice, the flame.
Only in middle night when dreams are deep,
And shut the sense in chambers hung around
With pictured arras, far from daily things,
Love beats in vain without, his drowsy wings,
And of your name there echoes no least sound
In those dim corridors of lonely sleep.

SONNETS

(13)

No newer words or ways now can I find
To tell my love for thee. The song I sung
Hath rung all changes that my faltering tongue
Finds power to utter, since no ear inclined
To list me or approve. Time be more kind,
And bring himself to me. My lute's unstrung
Till he be by, and joy's sweet note is wrung
From sorrow, pallid-lipped and unresigned.
Having said all I may, what have I said
To pleasure thee? Some sweetness echoes here
May, in some future hour uncomforted,
Speak, and persuade to joy thy listening ear.
For this while, I'll be mute! Oh might I feel
On these hushed lips, thy lips their silence seal.

LOST LOVE

(1)

AND never cometh vanished Spring again !
Winterwards slow revolves the circling year,
The drifting snow forgets the fruitful rain,
And earth is dead, and blackened boughs are bare.
Desolate heart, why wilt thou weep in vain ?
Love left thee in the dawning with white feet
That gleamed a moment on this lower plane,
Then sought the heights, the morning star to greet.
Behold the empty years ! Thou shalt not find
This Love of thine, nor any vanished Spring
To shake down blossoms, breathing south. The wind
Blows as it lists, and never dawn shall bring
Our yesterdays again. The drifted snow
Falls white and light as May-blooms long ago.

SONNETS

(2)

IMPEACH no Gods for't ! Only ours the amiss !
Weep with me that we held in our linked hands,
What-might-have-been, like grain of golden sands,
And let it slip between a kiss and kiss.
We shall not gather it again, our bliss :
The wind of bitter words and railing speech
Whirled all the scattered gold, far out of reach.
Something is gone that all our lives must miss.
We shall not find our vanished love again,
But at the grave of buried happiness
Our hands may touch. What is it we have slain ?
Something too rare for fallen hearts to guess.
Let's gather rue and rosemary to fling
Over the dead and Requiescat sing.

SONNETS

(3)

WHAT have we done with Love and Life, we two ?
We meant all well by both. What have we done ?
Night thickens, winds are moaning, the pale sun
Sinks through a mist of watery clouds from view.
I sit and watch with folded hands, and you,
Silent beside the fireglow, lift your eyes
And brooding, mark the storm-flecked autumn skies.
The year is done. Can Love be dying too ?
So far away you seem ; as in a tomb,
I feel alone. No spirit touches mine.
The shadows on the wall, the yellow shine
Of desolate street lamps, twinkling through the gloom,
Haunt like old tears. Mute, in the dusky room,
We watch and wait, and know we wait in vain.

SONNETS

THE RETURN

LET us return again whence we have come.
Oh, yet again return my Soul! the day.
Darkens with tempest ; wilder grows the way :
Let us return again whence we have come.
Ah there among the flowers the wild bee's hum
Made music, and the stream with roundelay
Went rustling, rippling through the sedges grey—
But here the alien world is blind and dumb.
Coldly the wind out of the frozen North
Blows on our dreams, and droops their rainbow wings.
The whole world seems a tomb of dear dead things :
Oh, Soul of mine, why did we venture forth ?
Far, far it beacons, starlike, o'er the plain.
Whence we have come, let us return again.

SONNETS

LONG AGO

YES, some day, little one, you'll come to know
And understand the mood you woke to-day.
It stirred your wonder, pausing in your play
To speak of something happened *long ago* :
And straight you found you were forgot—a glow
Lightened those soft, old cheeks ; the dim, old eyes
Grew changed with dreams. You saw with mute surprise
The ghost of youth come back, the blind tears flow.
You too, when time has ta'en his piteous toll,
Harkening some tale of days long vanished,
Will move pale lips, nodding a wintry head—
“I was young then ! ” and children at your knee
Will stand and stare with startled eyes to see,
Down your worn cheek, slow tears unheeded roll.

SÖNNETS

THE FERRYMAN

SEE the broad river, quiet as a dream,
Floating with scarce a whisper twixt the wide,
Receding shores. Borne on the ample tide,
Drowsing I watch reflected gloom and gleam,
Fair noonday's gold and midnight's silvery beam.
I know the sundered banks on either side,
And every country landmark is my guide,
Who keep the ferry of the middle stream.
I have seen elves under the moonlit ray
Dancing, and naiads with their drowning locks,
Beckoning to lure my vessel on the rocks.
But ah, my dream is haunted night and day,
Once to behold the mountain sources far,
Or hear the tumult of the harbour bar.

SONNETS

ST. HELENÆ

FAR in the south, a dreaming island keeps
His memory, in a green secluded dell,
Where never breathes the loud Atlantic's swell,
And only lilies, down the grassy steeps,
Break in pale foam. The spreading willow weeps
Over his tomb : a stone, rough hewn, to tell
How even fallen greatness slumbers well,
Unvexed of dreams, But he is hence ; he sleeps
Besides a northern stream. He sees no more
The aloe flowering by the rocky shore,
The arum in the glade, the sea-line far,
Bounding his little world. . . . The patient eyes
Of wondering angels watch on Bethlehem's star
Blazon of battle graven where he lies.

SONNETS

HAUNTED

LONG, long ago, where snowy mountains reared
Far summits to the clouds, I dwelt alone
In a forsaken castle, overgrown
With ivy ; hoary with the druid beard
Of pendant mosses. From the turrets leered
Fantastic faces carved in crumbling stone.
A slow stream babbled in an undertone,
And echo like a goblin laughed and jeered.
At sunset all the western heaven began
To glow blood-red, and bats on dusky wings
Wheeled noiseless ; night was full of obscene things
Nameless yet terrible, and paler than
A sheeted ghost, over the forest rose
A great blanched moon, that lit the far-off snows.

SONNETS

MOONLIGHT

How wan to-night the travelling moon appears,
Like some sad Queen whose praises far are flown,
Who nurses in her secret heart alone
A grief unguessed at by her glittering feres.
Down through still darkness drop her pearly tears,
The wind sighs answer in an undertone,
And now she seems to loose her silver zone,
And doff her cloudy vestment. She appears
Half hid in amber tresses, yet so bright,
Like faces round an altar, hushed and pale,
The dim stars reel, she only left in sight ;
And lock by lock, resolvèd neophyte,
Shears off her tresses, standing stark and white,
One moment ere she takes the shrouding veil.

SONNETS

DOLORS

(1)

Now none that rail may reach thee any more,
Nor trouble the deep sleep of those dark eyes
On whose o'er-wearied lids long twilight lies,
And dreams, beside the ultimate dim shore
Where, maybe, dreams come true. Death shuts the door
Of sleep on grief's importunate desire,
And thou art grown cold, for all the wind-blown fire
Love fanned in thy hushed heart, so quick before.
Nor may we question thee, for all replies
Are Death's, and on thy lips chill silence waits ;
We may not greet till thro' the clay-cold gates
Our souls have passed into—what Paradise ?
Where love's torn sails are furled from every blast,
And rapture turns forgetfulness at last.

SONNETS

DOLORES

(2)

THY name was Grief, and Grief was kin to thee,
Closer than all save Love ; and Love was blind,
And gave his garlands Grief's pale brow to bind,
And set him on thy heart for deity.
Yet from those thorns that claimed thy fealty,
Once didst thou pluck a sweet, red-petalled flower,
Whose core was Death, and in a secret bower
Didst wear it next thy heart for memory
Of joy that might have been, had Life been kind.
O child, so patiently to Death resigned,
What wisdom whispered thee, the dream was best,
And bade thee hence, before that cozening guest
Experience came, to pluck the rainbow weft
From Hope, and leave thee of thy dream bereft ?

SONNETS

THE DESERTER

I AM not for the wars of these loud times :
Cry *Recreant* who will—from the fierce tide
Of call and counter-call, I turn aside,
And in my plaited arbour con my rhymes.
Over the roof Romance, full-flowering climbs,
The tree of Dreams is rustling at the side :
It is enough—let the loud world deride !
Above that laughter, poets hear the chimes
Wafted at twilight out of fairyland.
Too well, too true they know the world's awry.
Not theirs to lead the assault with lance in hand,
But like a choir of birds, clear-throated cry
How, far beyond the clamour of these jars,
Peace sits secure, crowned with the morning stars.

SONNETS

SLEEP

NINE hours I lay beside Lethean streams,
Where comes no whisper and no footstep fails,
And from the Hills of Sleep no bugle calls
To ope the portal of the House of Dreams.
So dark and still to stay, almost it seems
A little death, denying Memory.
Entombed too deep for vagrant Fantasy
To pierce the shrouding veil with fleeting gleams.
But, though Remembrance hath no word to say,
Now flesh and spirit know, that, where they lay,
Were grass and healing herbs, and a clear wave,
O'ershadowed by sweet hills, wherein to lave
All weariness in hearkening some faint song,
Beguiling grief and care, and life's old wrong.

OCTOSYLLABICS

LAZARUS

'Tis done, the tedious long expense
Of soul and body, all the strife,
The daily death to snatch for life
Your crust of bread, your piteous pence.
Heaven bring you, comrade, now your're hence,
Where there's some better law than knife,
To end the pangs of child and wife,
And salve your wrongs with recompense.

Heaven salve my conscience too, that I
May think there's justice in the sky,
And while my banquet I digest,
Condone the poor with "God knows best !
What cares oppress the rich man's lot,
While beggars merely starve and rot !"

c
OCTOSYLLABICS

DEAD

LIVING, he was of all the scorn.
In a mean street his days were led,
With dark eaves meeting overhead.
An abject tenement forlorn,
Where scarce a ray to cheer the morn,
Or gild the sultry noon was shed.
And when his children cried for bread,
He cursed the tide that he was born.

None certés did him reverence—Now,
As to a passing King they bow ;
And had they ever learned to pray,
His little white-faced children all,
Who wonder at the flower-decked pall,
Would ask a funeral every day.

OCTOSYLLABICS

MURDER

HERE's the grey street, the tenement
Disastrous where the thing was done.
How palely glints the wintry sun
On blinds awry and curtains rent,
And all the squalid mystery pent
Behind those casements, smeared and dun,
Where slow defiling, one by one,
The dull crowd gapes its wonderment.

The sunlight on the trappings shines
Of those who stand to ward the street,
And marshal on the ordered lines
Of lifted faces, shuffling feet,
And paints a glory round her head,
So young, so fair, so still—and dead !

OCTOSYLLABICS

SENTENCE

THERE in the dock he stands and peers
With ferret eyes ; his stupid head
A little bowed, ill-clad, half-fed,
With black, cropped poll, and apeline ears,
Dumb, desperate, choking nameless fears,
Grey lips close bitten on his dread :
Stands there to hear his sentence read,
And scarce believes the word he hears.

Swing for it ? Aye, for harboured grudge
Or calculated hate ! But I
Scarce raised my hand—the thankless drudge,
'Twas just her spiteful way to die !
He nods and shuffles : Finish quick,
She's played me out, and won the trick.

OCTOSYLLABICS

FELO DE SE

A DUSTY room where spiders sit
In shadowy corners, like the Fate
Watches some lives—a fireless grate—
A court where draggled phantoms flit . . .
From ear to ear, the throat was slit,
And all your science came too late
To save a soul that would not wait
For further foretaste of the pit.

A huddled woman crouching there,
Wide-eyed and vacant with despair,
The only comrade that he had,
Stares hopeless, while the Jury bring
A verdict on the lifeless thing
Grins ghastly in the coffin—Mad.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE MAGDALEN

THE street's the mart where she parades
Her merchandise. No beacon star
Uplifts her eyes, that fixed and far
Pursue the lamplit, long arcades.
The night's her friend—but not the shades
Hallow still fields where daisies are,
And only Cynthia's gleaming car
Swims to the silent west, and fades.

Mayhap in days gone by she knew
Some brighter world, now best forgot.
To what she has, like me and you,
She clings, accustomed to her lot ;
Nor sees the fatal close, nor hears
The whispering river in her ears.

OCTOSYLLABICS

ADULTERY

BEYOND the pale of Christian folk,
Lay them to sleep; this pair of lovers
Under their daisy-sprinkled covers,
Nor bell be tolled, nor incense smoke,
Nor priest the sacred Name invoke.
Here all day long the wailing plovers
Lament, the owl at twilight hovers,
And dark funereal ravens croak.

Nor let them in one sepulchre
Sleep their last sleep, but separate
The guilty mistress and her mate;
Lest the old sin begin afresh,
And he that died for love of her
Seduce the slowly crumbling flesh.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE ARMY

Where the North-easter bites and blows
About the squalid Sunday ways
The littered dust of weekadays,
Whipped whirling from its dead repose,
And shuttered shops, in vacant rows,
Stare with aloof, unfriendly gaze,
The Army's sudden banners blaze,
The lifted cymbals clash and close.

To save a human soul from Hell,
The Hell whose kindled torches flame
Thro' hungry days and nights of shame,
Shrill, fife and drum! Loud trumpet tell
The glory of Emanuel,
Signal from Earth to Heaven, *All's well!*

OCTOSYLLABICS

VISION

A SPIRIT, like the lightning swift
He runs upon the Hills of Time,
Where obscure vapours coil and climb
And cloud battalions darkly drift.
He sees the daystar thro' a rift,
Bright herald of a golden prime,
When all the harps of heaven in chime
The song of new creation lift.

Lo, Chaos broods with sheltering wings
To bring to light the promised birth,
And blossoms of uncounted springs
Darkling attend the happier earth.
The Man to come, redeemed to mirth,
Thro' cloud and storm that Spirit sings.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE IVORY TOWER

HERE on the edge of Chaos stands
My Soul. The world is left afar ;
No radiance of the tiniest star
Illumes these lone and barren lands.
Vainly I grope with helpless hands"
While darkness holds me like a bar,
And in the night, Life's headlong car
Is swallowed of Time's ravening sands.

Eternity her dusky wave
Advances neath the wind of Death,
My Soul is withered in its breath—
Ah who shall aid me ? What shall save ?
Might I but reach my secret bower !
Might I attain my Ivory Tower.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE CITY OF REFUGE

THERE is a City on a height,
With clustering roofs and turrets tall,
And round about a crumbling wall,
That, like a lover through the night
Circles ~~her~~ sleep, embracing tight
Her spires and towers and homesteads all.
And sentries go, with soft footfall.
To keep my City of delight.

Oh Soul ! the world is wide and strange :
There at the fountain pigeons drink,
And all the air is musical
With fluttering birds and water's fall,
And whispering roses at the brink—
Oh Soul of mine, why wilt thou range ?

OCTOSYLLABICS

ASPIRATION

It strives and flutters in my breast
With upward flight of lifted wings,
And like a lyric seraph sings
The inner vision, God-possessed,
The pilgrim soul's eternal quest,
Still soaring to immortal things.
Then flags its rapture, droops its wings,
The consummation unexpressed.

Ah vainly shalt thou shake the bars
Of this confining cage of flesh,
Or seek to rend the tangling mesh
Withholds thee from thy native stars.
Mayhap the stars themselves are just
Mirage, and Death's large freedom—dust.

OCTOSYLLABICS

A DEAD CHILD

OH little feet, why hasten ye
The starry heights of Death to climb ?
But lately born a child of Time,
Impatient for Eternity.
So soon the dull earth cloyed—and we
Who set our greeting bells a-chime,
Can only guess what brighter clime,
Beyond our vision beckons thee.

The stairs of Death are dark and steep ;
We tremble when our feet must tread
The way your spirit lightly fled,
Till, stayed in some celestial place,
Turning, you miss your mother's face :
Oh never weep dear, never weep !

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE HEIR

You'll come to know your heritage
One day. So God our footsteps guide,
I go beside you when you ride
Your Rosinante, fling your gage
To giants, and your soul enrage,
To find a windmill spreading wide
Fantastic arms. Yet, better tried
And failed, than never to engage.

But there's a world of fairy too,
Where better than our dreams comes true,
And Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare wait,
To welcome at the Golden Gate
Whoever knocks ; there's none so young
But just for him their song was sung.

OCTOSYLLABICS

WISHES

THE Stars out of the summer sky
Are falling, and they leave a trail
Of fading splendour as they fail,
A thread of gold to conjure by.
Wish what thou wilt, dear heart, but I
Have done with wishing, who behold
Earth can no flower from winter hold,
And Stars, like candles, quench and die.

Youth lists a rainbow bird that sings
Of wonder worlds that glitter far,
And every dewy dawning brings
New vigour to the soaring wings,
New trophies for the victor's car.
Experience sees the falling star.

OCTOSYLLABICS

APRIL

'Twas ere the Spring was full awake,
And but a whisper in the air
Of something coming, sweet and rare ;
I wandered by the reedy lake,
Alone and sad for Chloe's sake.
I saw a tuft of curling hair,
And peering horns half hidden there,
And jocund from the beechen brake,
The laughing Pan before me leapt.
He piped the swallows to the eaves,
And to the barren boughs the leaves,
Stars out of heaven to deck the ground ;
And from the cavern where they slept,
The winds that rock the Spring unbound.

THE MART

My land's for auction : who will buy
The cloistèred souls of lilies frail
That star the shadow-haunted vale,
The pageant of the April sky,
Enchantèd islands drifting by,
The rapture of the nightingale,
A crumbling castle crowns the dale,
A page of English history ?
Authentic fairy ringlets too,
Traced with their tripping in the dew,
When the harvest moon, low-swinging,
Stoops to list unearthly singing—
And with the rest, to turn the scale,
The dreams of youth I bring for sale.

OCTOSYLLABICS

PASTORAL

With feet untiring, in a ring,
Come, trip it where the cowslips nod,
And purple crocus stars the sod,
And throstles tune their notes to sing
How, far across the mountains, Spring
Has come with her enchanting rod
To teach them chant the praise of God
And train for flight the nestling's wing.

The boughs are bare against the sky,
But palm is golden in the hedge,
And water crowfoot in the sedge,
And fleecy clouds are sailing high.
—Cuckoo ! Hearken ! far and near,
April music, wild and clear !

OCTOSYLLABICS

BUTTERFLIES ¹

SHYLY the sunlight on the pane
Glitters, and makes a dappled show
Of light and shadow. Let us go
Glad to the happy world again !
Gone are the clouds, and after rain
Unfolding flowers their incense blow ;
And see, Oh see ! Like summer snow,
The Chrysalids their prison chain
Have broke, and all the ground is white,
The air a swirl of timid things
That revel in the sudden light,
And in the sunshine stretch their wings ;
Like darkling souls to rapture born,
Greeting their Resurrection morn.

¹ The writer saw a veritable snow-storm of white butterflies breaking from the chrysalis, on a warm day at the end of the rainy season in the Transvaal.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE CHERRY TREE

SEE, like a first communicant,
This little tree, all veiled in white,
Stand quivering for the sacred rite
Where kissing sunbeams fall aslant.
Hark how the matin skylarks chant !
The furze bush is an acolyte
With yellow tapers all alight,
Earth, altar, shrine and ministrant.

Each silvery flower, each peering leaf
The *Credo* seals of her belief,
Whose spirit while creation slept,
A faithful Lenten vigil kept.
Oh once denied the heavenly voice,
How could her branches now rejoice ?

OCTOSYLLABICS

ANEMONE

THIS pensive flower, Anemone,
I've gathered on my woodland walk,
And could the fragile blossom talk,
The whole of Spring's hid mystery
Her rosy lips might tell : but she
Sits nodding on a threadlike stalk,
And six pale petals mutely balk
The wonder at the heart of me.

Still dark in earth, her fibres drew
From Springs gone by, their sun and dew,
And summer splendours, long since dead,
Dawning's white fire and sunset's red,
Rekindle in the cup that nods
Over the tombs of perished Gods.

OCTOSYLLABICS

LOST GODS

(1)

THE Gods sit nodding ; slumber creeps
Like some miasma, from the ground,
Or like a shroud to fold them round,
Of whom no altar memory keeps.
None names them now ; no woman weeps
Adonis ; never whinnies hound
For Cynthia ; Mercury unbound
Long since his wingèd shoes and sleeps.

'Tis you, that hurry to and fro,
And scarcely from the dingy street
Your eyes uplift the stars to greet ;
In whose dull hearts a sepulchre
Is reared where all things bright and fair
Must rot—'tis you will have it so !

OCTOSYLLABICS

LOST GODS

(2)

THEY shall not vanish like a c'loud,
Nor like mirage elusive swim
Over the far horizon's rim,
Those maidens fair and heroes proud,
The Gods and all the Olympian crowd,
Old Homer and the poets hymn,
For all their glory glimmers dim,
And Time is busy on their shroud !

An Altar of mine own I'll raise
And make a smoke of incense there,
And garland the grey stone with bays
And asphodels—in a far isle,
Where dusky cypress cleaves the air,
And azure sky and ocean smile.

OCTOSYLLABICS

HESPERIDES

On somewhere in the golden West
They float, the bright Hesperides,
Washed with the foam of rainbow seas,
Where dreamers' galleons come to rest ;
Each glimmering isle a happy nest
Of singing birds and droning bees,
A Paradise of flowers and trees,
Fair-fruited on the sunlit crest.

In vain, in vain my fragile bark
I steered, and sought the promised shore.
Dark lowers the sky, the waters dark,
The friendly stars appear no more :
Guide me, thou Helmsman, grim and stark,
Where Hope and Love have flown before.

OCTOSYLLABICS

SONG

THEY'RE singing down the empty street,
Above the moaning wintry weather,
A song we sang long since together,
In unforgotten summers, fleet
As their own shadows—sweet, ah sweet,
With pomp and purple of the heather,
When care rode lighter than a feather
On larks that soar the sun to greet. .

But here's a desolate, windy way,
Where closely shuttered houses frown,
And thro' the curtains peers no ray
To cheer the singers, as they stray
With flagging footsteps, up and down,
And songs that slowly die away.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE MIRROR

SEE, how these tranquil deeps unfold,
Clear imaged in the reedy rim,
A wonder world of bright and dim ;
From fleecy clouds on azure rolled,
To tasselled catkins tarnished gold,
Reflected where no ripples swim
Nor April swallow stoops to skim
The moveless waters, calm and cold.

The Poet's soul should mirror so
The sense of mortal things below,
Passionless, steadfast and serene,
As images in water seen :
Flowers, trees and clouds, and, far beyond,
Heaven's azure in a wayside pond.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE SINGER TO THE SONGS

(I)

My Songs, I sent you down the wind
With silvery wing, and wing all sable
Fluttering, to seek some rich man's table,
Some refuge from the night to find.
What, ne'er a hostel? All unkind?
Sad strain and sweet alike unable
To win you hearing midst their Babel?
Home to my heart, poor oft-declined!

And Oh, when Death shall beckon me,
Where Love, nor Wine, nor Spring inspires,
A silent-footed company,
With trailing garments, muted lyres,
Come, of your grace! fair pinions furled,
And sing my Requiem to the world.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE SINGER TO THE SONGS

(2)

LAST night a vision brought me where
Myself upon a flower-strewn bed
Lay, with that smile only the dead
On their white lips for sacring wear.
Amazed to see myself so fair,
With every fret and furrow fled,
Some angel wrought this peace, I said,
Time's tedious ravage to repair.

And round about I might behold
A company of pilgrims pale,
With passionate lip, and hair 'sad gold,
The clear-eyed questers of the Grail:
My piteous Songs, they came to say
Farewell and, dreamlike, melt away.

OCTOSYLLABICS

THE SINGER TO THE SONGS

(3)

My little Songs, my children dear,
I would not leave you here to moan
Your orphaned plight when I am gone !
Through many a wintry night and drear
Disconsolate day my only cheer—
Now must my spirit travel on
The boundless fields of death alone,
Beyond the farthest twinkling sphere.

Come, all together, like a flight
Of shrilling larks, into the light—
Up, from a world that never heard,
To where beyond the star-pierced dome,
He waits, the Master of the Word,
Who welcomes all his minstrels home.

THE CRITIC

THE CRITIC

Not harshly, Critic, judge the singer's strain !
A little kindness to the poet's art
Is like the summer sun that woos apart
Flower petals, folded to the chilling rain.
The good you give, we render fast again,
Expanding wide a fragrant, golden heart.
But when in gall you dip the venom'd dart
What shall you harvest from the poet's pain ?
Think, you that slay a soul with cynic words,
And laugh the sudden silence follows on,
You are like wanton boys that stone the birds,
And think none heeds one feathered minstrel gone.
Some angel weeps the dewy pinion crushed,
And heaven's the poorer for the music hushed.

